PDConnection
Linking Practitioners and Resources

Motivation & Persistence Towards Reaching Goals: *What does it take?*

Welcome from Sarah Hindman Hawker
Vice President, Kentucky Adult Education

Since coming to Kentucky, one of my goals has been to enhance communication between the KYAE staff and adult educators in the field. I'm delighted that *PD Connection* will once again play an important role in providing practical information that program directors and instructors can put to use in their programs and classrooms.

As we continue our focus on helping more students reach important educational outcomes such as making learning gains, earning the GED, making higher GED scores and transitioning to postsecondary education, professional development is more critical than ever before. KYAE is working hard to make sure professional development is aligned with the needs of both instructors and students.

I hope you enjoy this and future issues of *PD Connection* and have the opportunity to implement some of the best practices the newsletter will spotlight. As always, we welcome your ideas and suggestions for improving professional development for adult educators.

Sincerely,

Sarah Hindman Hawker

Vice President, Kentucky Adult Education

Setting Students Up for Success!
By Carleen Ficker, M.Ed., Instructor Grant County

Twenty years ago when I first became acclimated with "Adult Education" someone said to me, "The hardest step for an adult non-reader is to walk through a center's door to ask for help." The hardest step for the instructor is to keep them there! I think that piece of insight still holds true. These are just a few of the strategies I have used to: "Set Students Up for Success."

Organization—- Have students use appointment cards and planners. This strategy helps increase attendance and accountability. I give the appointment card to the student on first encounter with the explanation that this is a tool to help better serve them as a student and the center. Then we write in the planner what we will be working on during the next session, with the understanding that if they cannot make that session, to please let me know. Each year I am amazed at how this simplest of strategies is the most beneficial for students. Years later, students have come back to tell me how this strategy has been the most successful to them in the job market, vocational school or even college.

Structure —- With a very high percentage of students coming to adult education with learning differences, I designed the reading program to be more structured and systematic. I broke the program up into two crucial parts: 1. Literacy tutoring for grade equivalent 0-3.9; and 2. Reading-

PD Partners

- Kentucky Adult Education (KYAE)
- Collaborative Center for Literacy Development (CCLD)
- Adult Education Academy for Professional Development
- Kentucky Institute for Family Literacy

Setting up Students for Success (cont.)

Writing Workshop for grade equivalency 4.0-8.0. The literacy tutoring is for small group tutorials of one to three students with more direct instruction and constant guidance. The idea is to then move those students up from literacy tutoring into the Reading-Writing Workshop of five to ten students. The goal of the workshop is to have the student reach the 8.0 grade equivalency, where they can start to function at a more independent level, then eventually return the student back to the center.

Preparation —- For literacy tutoring I used a basic reading lesson plan. I show students this plan and what areas we will concentrate on such as fluency, word recognition, comprehension and response to reading and writing. This enables the students to be partners in their learning. Preparation for the Reading-Writing Workshop consists of a syllabus, the format you are creating the work-shop around, times for conferencing and the books you will be using for the workshop.

Students tell me by using these

terms and this approach they feel as that I believe in them. They then believe in themselves and can participate to complete the workshop.

Tip: My favorite books and the ones the students have the most success with are called, *New Books for New Readers*. They are short, sweet and to the point, yet written in an adult manner. There is something for everyone from: *Kentucky Ghosts and Tragedies* to *Choices, and Women Who Made a Difference*. For some students reading *New Books for New Readers* means experiencing the success of reading a book in its entirety for the first time in their lives.

FOOTNOTE:

I have students fill out an evaluation at the end of each Reading-Writing Workshop. The students and I were in total agreement on what strategies helped motivate them and made them persevere. They were: being prepared; organized; and structured, everything I mentioned. To my surprise the number one motivator

"While all of the strategies in and of themselves are so vital, the instructor is the most important motivator."

that helped the students stay on course and persevere was the instructor!

I called three of my students to verify this information. Their response was "while all these strategies in and of themselves are so vital, the instructor is the most important motivator". On that note, we as instructors tend to forget how important we really are and how much we make a difference in our student's lives.

Carleen Ficker currently serves as a trainer, reading coach, and consultant in addition to family reading at Grant County. She is a veteran instructor with over 25 years experience in reading. Her background ranges from elementary, middle school, Sylvan Learning Center, to the Learning Assistance Center at Northern Kentucky University in conjunction with adult education.

What Teachers Make
by T. Obermeyer, Milan, Indiana (submitted by Carleen Ficker)

The dinner guests were sitting around the table discussing life. One man, a CEO, decided to explain the problem with education. He argued, "What's a person going to learn from someone who decided that his best option in life was to become a teacher?"

He reminded the other dinner guests what they say about teachers: " Those who can, do. Those who can't teach." To stress this point he said to another guest, "You're a teacher ,

Susan. Be honest. What do you make?"

Susan, who had a reputation for honesty and frankness replied, "You want to know what I make?"

"I make students work harder than they ever thought they could. I make a C+ feel like the winner of the Congressional Medal of Honor. You want to know what I make?"

"I make students wonder. I make them question. I make them analyze, then criticize. I encourage

them to write. I inspire them to read, read, read, read. I make them want to show all their work in math and their final drafts in English. I let them understand that if you have the brains, and follow you heart, and if someone ever tries to judge you by what you make, you must pay no attention because they just didn't learn."

Susan paused a minute and then continued. "You want to know what I make?"

" I MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

What do you make?"

Hello *from Sandra Kestner, Ed.D, Senior Associate , Professional Development , KYAE*

Welcome back to *PD Connection*, the professional development newsletter created to link professional development to best practices. First introduced in the Spring of 2003, *PD Connection* now has a new look and logo and we're so happy to be back. As we begin 2007, we hope this newsletter will give you some practical ideas for your classroom as well as be enjoyable to read.

The theme of this edition of *PD Connection* is motivation: persistence towards reaching goals. This newsletter will bring you articles and ideas from practitioners in the field. In planning this issue, the professional development partners wanted articles from providers on motivation techniques and strategies for teaching reading, math, ESL, and family literacy. We hope there is something of interest to you.

In our cover story, Carleen Ficker, instructor from Grant County Adult Education, presents information on how to set up your students for success! You'll also see regular features on technology tips, new staff, and other practical tools and strategies.

A special thanks goes to Dawn Hanzel, the new adult literacy director for KAELI. She will be coordinating *PD Connection.* You will hear more about her plans for the *PD Connection* newsletter and how you can contact her with your ideas or articles.

Sincerely,

Sandra Kestner, Ed.D

Greetings from CCLD Adult Literacy
by Dawn Hanzel, CCLD Adult Literacy Director

Greetings Kentucky Adult Education Team!

I am the new adult literacy director for the Collaborative Center for Literacy Development. I am excited to be returning to my first love… adult education. I left retail management to enter adult education and literacy and am glad to be back. I most recently left the Cabinet for Health and Family Services where I have spent the last 6 years in professional development and training for social work. In the past, I served as professional development coordinator for the Department of Adult Education and Literacy (DAEL), as a literacy tutor and as an educational coordinator for medicine, business and the university continuing education.

I am excited about the future of professional development for adult literacy educators in Kentucky. We have many new and exciting opportunities coming your way this next fiscal year. We hope this newsletter will be an additional resource and communication tool for all interested in adult literacy in Kentucky. It is a partnership among NCFL, KYAE, CCLD and the Adult Education Academy of Professional Development.

We want this newsletter to be a useful and practical tool. We welcome any and all feedback. Please send ideas, such as topics, articles, resources, etc. to my e-mail at dawn.hanzel@uky.edu.

I am looking forward to working with each of you in promoting literacy in Kentucky.

Please visit our Web site at www.kentuckyliteracy.org

Goal Setting Strategies *by Jan Mulikin, Boone County Adult Education*

During orientation of each school year, I introduce my ESL students to the concept of setting goals. When asking if anyone has set a goal for the year, hands fly up with the proud response, "This year I want to learn English." Titters around the classroom second this motion with affirmation as everyone's goal for the year. *Right?* Well, maybe for some that is an appropriate goal. But for others, it becomes a burden, especially to adult learners who struggle with the responsibilities of work, family, social adjustment, and everyday survival. After several attempts of setting goals, yet rarely meeting the goals, I decided to go about the task in another manner.

When my daughter was about ten or eleven, I remember an incident that stuck with me. Her brother ran inside the house one day, and begged her to stop doing her homework and come outside to shoot hoops with him.

Goal Setting Strategies (cont.)

With a serious face, my daughter simply said, "No, I don't want to live in a box." My son shrugged it off with a "You're weird," comment and ran on without her. When I asked about it she told me, "Mom, my teacher told me if we don't do homework, we won't pass our grade. If we don't pass each year, we'll flunk out of school. If we flunk out of school, we can't get a job. If we can't get a job, we become homeless and have to live down by the river in a box. I don't want to live in a box." While I smiled at her teacher's attempt to get students motivated for homework, I realized she had set a goal to *never* have to live in a box, right then and there at the tender age of ten. But that goal started with doing her homework.

No matter what we set as our goal, it is important to learn *how* to set a goal. A few years ago, (or perhaps longer—where does the time go!), I attended a national adult education conference, and received a sample packet for student orientation. In that packet was a page with questions and suggestions about setting goals.

The example was of a person's hand. The thumb had 'one month?' written above it; the index finger had 'three months?' written above it; the middle finger had 'six months?' written above it; the ring finger had 'one year?', and finally the pinkie finger had 'five years?' This gives students a chance to recognize learning English will not happen in one month, six months or even a year. Instead, we write sentences at the bottom of the page.

For example, "In one month, I want to speak enough English, so I can fill out a job application." Once the final outcome is established, the student can tackle the learning process, knowing they can realistically reach their goal in one month. Or a simpler goal, "Learn how to write my name, address and phone number." Literacy level students can copy a few words from the board, "one month=job" "one month=name, address, phone."

By the pinkie finger, students should

"Whatever their final outcome, setting goals gives them a dream to press towards."

"Right after New Year's we have our goal assessment and start fresh with renewed dreams! Tie into a My Resolutions writing assignment."

have a more permanent idea of *why* they want to learn English. Maybe that five year goal is to be making enough money to bring the rest of their family to the U.S. Or, maybe that goal is to start studying for the GED. Perhaps their goal is to *not* live in a box—but instead learn verbs so they can learn to speak English sentences correctly.

Whatever their final outcome, setting goals gives them a dream to press towards. Naturally, as human nature seems to intervene, we tend to veer off-course from these goals. That is when we need to review our goals and reaffirm our desire to restart our engines and get back to work. This happens usually right before the holiday when attendance wanes and students work longer hours. Right after New Year's we have

our goal assessment and start fresh with renewed dreams! Tie it into a *My Resolutions* writing assignment. Fortune cookies can be passed out in class with their dream written in the cookie. We all have to have our batteries recharged and a large dose of encouragement to get back to work.

Once you see students meeting that first goal, acknowledge their achievements. A 'popcorn and movie' class, a new pencil or bookmark, homemade cookies—anything to let them know they have *made it*! Students start celebrating with others' accomplishments and that encourages them to continue with their quests. This lesson can be applied to teachers, as well. We often get caught up in the 'goals achieved' part of our program's record-keeping. But setting realistic goals of just *one* little improvement in a student's ability, gives us a monumental battery recharge, as well! So let's *think outside the box,* so we can *stay out of the box* and set some super goals for this new year!

Motivating the Adult Learner: It's All in the Approach

By Mary Wells, GED/ABE Instructor Winchester/Clark County Literacy Council, Inc.

The adult is a special breed of learner. They find themselves back in a classroom setting only with specific goals in mind, a job promotion or perhaps higher education. They not only need a reason to be physically sitting in their seats, but a purpose for an obliga-

the methodology of *how* we should teach these subjects/skills. Instead, motivation looks to an issue given much less attention and yet essential in the goals of adult education, *how should we approach the adult learner*?

I say this because I was (am) an

> ## "They feel a sense of hopelessness that is sometimes disguised as disinterest. Because of this you should never talk down to your learner."

tion as overwhelming as learning. Adults usually come into the classroom motivated enough; however, their efforts don't always persist, and persistence is the key to success.

So how do we motivate the adult learner when they begin to lose interest? The first thing to consider is why they've lost interest. In fact it really is disinterest that interferes with their learning. As an educator, I have adopted my own teaching style, but I can't always be sure my methods add to my students' learning experience. Each learner learns differently. Among them are various strengths and weaknesses. It is my opinion that motivation is greatly determined by the approach we as educators take. This doesn't address *what* subjects/skills we should include in the educational platform or

adult learner, and my story probably varies little from the typical adult learner's story. I grew up under difficult circumstances, did not attend high school, married young, had children, and then divorced. In making this decision, I was left to care for three children on my own, with only an eighth grade education. I knew this would not suffice, so I earned a GED certificate when I was 30 years old and enrolled in college.

I share my story with my students, through conversation as well as instruction. I want them to know that I am one of them. I want them to see that I'm proof we can do whatever we want to do if we want it badly enough. Sharing this information has proven to be a wonderful tool for motivating my students. They immediately become more relaxed. They are inspired and see light at the end of the tunnel.

They feel a sense hopelessness that is sometimes disguised as disinterest. Because of this you should never talk down to your adult learner, advertently or inadvertently. Never show frustration, never ridicule them, and don't show too much sympathy. Too much sympathy can be interpreted as condescension and they may stop learning from you. I have had this experience myself as an adult learner. I can attest that humiliating and scolding your adult learner does nothing for their

motivation.

Learning is difficult enough for the adult learner we as instructors should not make it more so. Adults need a comfortable learning environment, an environment that allows them to learn. We should always approach them with encouragement and faith in their efforts. The method of instruction is important in educational gains, but the way we approach our learner is just as important if we want them to stay in our program long enough to make educational gains.

Motivation is the key to persistence and persistence the key to success. Their success entails much more than the instructional method you choose or the materials you use. Motivation dwells within the learner; it guides them forward and drives them onward. Motivation and persistence have a cause/effect relationship, and it would aid us as educators to always keep in mind that our approach to the learner can greatly affect their successes and/or failures.

> ## "The method of instruction is important in educational gains, but the way we approach our learner is just as important if we want them to stay in long enough to make educational gains."

Persistence Through Thinking Aloud

By Mary Wells, GED/ABE Instructor, Winchester/Clark County Literacy Council

In my classroom, I have found motivation to be a more common character than persistence. Most adults come into my classroom clearly motivated. I hear stories of the successes they plan to meet when they finish their studies with us and their goals thereafter. Unfortunately, many become overwhelmed in the sea of learning. There are too many subjects to learn, I've heard, and too many concepts buried within each. The learner may soon become disgruntled and their ability to persist might be dampened.

Renowned philosopher, astronomer, Galileo Galilei (1564-1642) once said, "You cannot teach people anything. You can only help them to discover it within themselves." These words hold power; these words hold truth and they uphold the premise I follow. I don't simply *teach* my students; I teach them how to learn. It is not enough, in the adult classroom, to simply point, name and explain a concept in its own context. We should show our students the process of discovery. We should talk them through it.

I believe that thinking aloud, one form of coached learning, is a very effective tool in the adult classroom. Thinking aloud walks them through each step in the process of discovery. It demonstrates the skills needed in making that discovery. Thus, I find myself focusing on these skills and the learner's proper use of them. Skills such as problem-solving, making predictions and inferences, knowing the main idea and thinking critically are crucial to learning. It is having strength in these skills that will make learning easier for them.

Thinking aloud has become second nature to me while I'm holding a book, a pen or marker at the front of my classroom. I talk my way through most of what I do, and I never correct a learner's work without an explanation. For example, I never move (or remove) a comma without explaining why it doesn't work where they've placed it. If they understand the process, they are more apt to use it correctly next time, in another context, isn't this the goal?

It hasn't been that many years since I regularly sat in a classroom as a student at Eastern Kentucky University. I had many professors that modeled what they wanted us to know or the paper they wanted us to construct, but I remember only one who talked aloud for us. He was good, and I find myself emulating his techniques. He talked out loud very casually as though thinking to himself. I found his insight very helpful. I learned much from him that semester and looked for his classes every semester that followed.

PDtrack Pointers by Toni Quire , Information Specialist KYAE

1. How do I make my PD plan active?

Even though we are coming to the end of the PDtrack year, there are still some PD plans that have not been committed to and checked out. Here are some short directions on how to make "Approved" plans "Active".

If you have a 2007 "Approved" plan in your "My PD Plan" area on https://pdtrack.kyvae.org, please do the following:

- Open up your 2007 "Approved" plan in your "My PD Plan" area.

- Using the right-hand scroll bar, pull the plan all the way to the bottom until you can see a "Commit" button. Select that.

- Immediately after selecting the "Commit" button, that button will turn into a "Checkout Plan" button. Select that.

- After you select the "Checkout Plan" button, you will see "Cart Details" in "Your Cart" area with all of your items listed. Pull the page all the way down to the bottom by using the right-hand scroll bar until you see on the far right-hand side a "Begin Checkout" button. Select that.

- You will then go through the checking out your cart process by completing the three "Checkout Steps" until you come to the final screen entitled "Checkout Step 3 – Confirmation & Receipt."

If you have a 2007 "Active" plan in your "My PD Plan" area on https://pdtrack.kyvae.org, but the items in your PD plan are not showing up in your PD History, please do the following:

- Select the "Checkout Plan" button and you will see "Cart Details" in "Your Cart" area with all of your items listed. Pull the page all the way down to the bottom by using the right-hand scroll bar until you see on the far right hand side a "Begin Checkout" button. Select that.

- You will then go through the checking out your cart process by completing the three "Checkout Steps" until you come to the final screen entitled "Checkout Step 3 – Confirmation & Receipt."

PLEASE NOTE: If you do not complete the above process, you will not be registered for the items in your plan. Your name will also not be included on the rosters for attendance. That includes your online items as well because they will not show up in your online learning environment (http://www.kyvae.org or http://www.kyvu.org).

2. How do I add items to my "Active" PD plan?

Once you have created and submitted your PD plan for approval, committed to your "Approved" PD plan and checked out your "Approved" PD plan (making it "Active") you cannot add any items to it. But if you see an activity that you want to register for in the PD catalog or PD calendar after your PD plan is "Active", you can register for that item through the catalog or calendar. After checking it out through the "My Cart" area, that course will show up in your PD history, but it will not appear in your PD plan.

REMEMBER: At the end of the year, the PD history is what is most important because it will show all of your PD activity whether it was originally in your PD plan or not.

If you need any further direction or help with the PDtrack system, please contact me at 502.573.5114 ext. 113 or e-mail me at toni.quire@ky.gov.

Family Literacy Intake

By Kathy Stovall, Senior Project Manager for the National Center for Family Literacy

We have all heard or said at some point or another "it's the first impression that counts," and so it is in the case of intake in family literacy programs. What a program does during its initial contact with families sets the stage for participation in the program. Whether it's how the families are greeted, the paperwork, or the amount of time it takes for intake, all of these things make up that first and lasting impression. Therefore, this process must be well planned with clearly defined goals, roles and activities.

Intake should incorporate a variety of skills and techniques that the program can use to learn about all of the family participants. It should include one-on-one scheduled time, oral and written communication, observation of interpersonal skills and an understanding for what the goals and needs are for the families.

Planning begins with identifying every intake opportunity and every staff person being prepared when those opportunities occur. Intake opportunities do not just occur when a family visits or calls your office, they may occur when a staff person is out in the field, visiting with a partner or attending a community event. Whatever the case, the staff has to be prepared with the right questions to ask. They need to know how to present clear information and what the next steps are to engage a family to committing to your program.

Secondly, intake is the time to set and define goals. The families should be encouraged to identify their short term and long term goals and how to achieve them through participation in the program. When the families identify their goals, the program can then share those goals and how they will support the families as well as meet program goals. By incorporating goals into the intake process it defines roles and establishes accountability.

Finally, intake should provide leadership for participation in family literacy activities. Families should receive a program calendar and schedule that clearly identifies what will occur and when so they begin to understand how their goals will fit into what the program has to offer.

Tips for making the intake process work

1. Get all staff engaged in the planning of intake.

Everyone should be familiar with the intake materials and how to take the families through the process.

2. Create and maintain a staff welcome bulletin board that has the names of the staff and what they do in the program.

3. Keep the client from needing to leave and come back.

If a potential client took the time to come when they did, then this is a good time for that person. Therefore, all staff must be up-to-date on the intake process, know how to process the paperwork and be ready to meet and greet.

4. Develop an intake checklist. Put things on the checklist in order of importance.

Include on the checklist a space to keep track of the dates of completion of items on the checklist.

5. Celebrate the completion of the checklist items with families.

A common comment: *"We don't need a checklist. Everyone fills out the same paperwork at the same time."*

Have you ever gone back into a folder and found a partially completed form with some key information missing because your client didn't have the information available and now you need it?

Give it time. Whether you call it intake or orientation, it takes longer than 30 minutes to explain the program and make the families feel welcome. In some cases the process can take more than a week. Gather the most important information first. If your client looks like they are getting overwhelmed, set up a schedule for gathering the remaining information.

Another common thought may be, *"Let's get this process over as quickly as possible. They don't care about the paperwork anyway."*

They care so much about the paperwork that they might not come back because there is so much and it can be very overwhelming.

If you implement these strategies, you should see your family literacy program grow!

SDAs Can Be Fun!

By Joyce Bullock, Associate, Professional Development, KYAE

Self-directed activities (SDAs) are making instructors' lives easier. Not only can they choose exactly the activity that interests them, they can earn credit for completing the SDA without leaving the adult education center. So if SDAs are so easy to get along with, why don't all instructors use them? Maybe we just don't realize the work we do everyday may qualify for an SDA.

For example, last year you attended the Orientation to Teaching Math workshop and came back with some new approaches and materials. This year you pull out those materials and consider how to use them with your students. You use the approaches as a guide and look through a few old math books or search the Web to find additional math problems.

You introduce the material to your students. To reinforce their learning, you and your students play one of the games you brought back from the math workshop. Later, and just for fun, you work with two students (who need a bit more reinforcement) and develop new problems for the math game. The next day the whole group plays the revised game. After some tweaking, you add the new game to your math toolkit for another day.

How could you have turned this into PD unit? Always begin by getting prior approval from your program director first. Once you get a green light, there's a couple of ways to earn the SDA.

1) **Five PDUs**— you can earn five PDUs by applying and evaluating new material in your classroom. In our math example, you would need to identify the math approaches, games and sources

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Your options are endless!
- ♦ **Observing**
- ♦ **Modeling**
- ♦ **Coaching and Feedback**
- ♦ **Journaling**
- ♦ **Applying**
- ♦ **Testing/Reporting**
- ♦ **Presenting**

(the math workshop and your old textbooks). After using them with your class, ask your students if the new material helped them to better understand the math concepts. Keep a log or journal of these activities and the feedback from your students. Give them a short quiz or use the game to evaluate their understanding. Note in your journal how you would improve the approach next time. Take your revised curriculum and your journal to your program director and discuss the project with him/her. Let your program director know that you have completed your SDA and ask him/her to record it in PDtrack.

Keep a copy of the journal entries in your staff folder.

2) **Three PDUs**— to earn three PDUs, pull together notes from the math workshop into a PowerPoint presentation. Develop a one-page evaluation form. Present the PowerPoint of the workshop at your program's staff meeting and have your colleagues play some of the games. Discuss how to introduce the materials to students and how to revise the materials for future use. Have everyone fill out the evaluation forms. Summarize their evaluations and keep it in your staff folder. Let your director know you have completed the SDA, and ask him/her to record it in PDtrack.

3) **Three more PDUs**— In a few months invite adult educators from some of the surrounding counties to an afternoon of pizza and math games. Tell everyone to bring their favorite math game(s). Play the games and discuss the best way(s) to use them with your students. Have participants complete a one-page evaluation of your math/pizza event. Keep their evaluations in your staff folder. Ask your director to record that you have completed your SDA on PDtrack.

There's nothing like food and games to make PD learning fun. Why not plan your SDA party today?

Additional Resources and Tools

- To download a study circle guide on adult student persistence go to: http://www.ncsall.net/fileadmin/resources/teach/lp.pdf.

- To see a complete listing of all NCSALL materials and research on the topic of adult student persistence, go to http://www.ncsall.net/?id=791.

(Each of these books are filled with strategies and tools for learner motivation)

- Wlodkowski, Raymond J. (1985). Enhancing Adult Motivation to Learn. Jossey-Bass Inc.: San Francisco, CA.

- Quigley, B. Allan. (1997). Rethinking Literacy Education. Jossey-Bass, Inc. San Francisco, CA.

- www.nifl.gov

- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Learning_styles & http://adulted.about.com/cs/learningstyles/a/lrng_style.htm

Orientation for Persistence

by Connie Spencer-Ackerman, Director, Adult Education Academy for Professional Development

There is research suggesting that learners need about 100 to 150 hours of instruction to achieve one grade equivalent's growth; however, in most states student persist for fewer than 100 hours. Aside from intervening factors that cannot be influenced by program staff, what can be done? More and more often, programs are treating orientation as the first step toward persistence.

With the recent growth experienced in many ABE programs, programs are developing structured, organized, scheduled orientations. They have given up on the practice of leaving twelve students to fend for themselves while a single walk-in absorbs twenty minutes of what should be instructional time. In preparation for this article, I asked participants in the Leadership Institute to describe their approaches and spoke with two out-of-state persons who have used scheduled orientations for several years. What I learned falls into categories of schedule or frequency, content, materials, challenges and orientation for community building.

Schedule or frequency—- Frequency ranges from two sessions (sequential sessions A & B) held one time a month to two sessions every week (sequential sessions A & B or two separate sessions) to one session each week. Schedules range from one morning and one evening to two evening sessions.

In some Kentucky programs and in one of the out-of-state programs, orientation is covered by one specific person who may or may not have any responsibilities for instruction. In the case where the person is not a teacher, instructors appreciate not having to cut into instructional hours to deliver orientation.

Content—- The amount of time devoted to orientation obviously relates to the content covered. Here the list is extensive, including:

• Adult learning and how it differs from K-12 schooling

• Introduction of staff and tour of facility

• Assessment, which might include locator testing, TABE administration, assessment of reading components, learning styles inventory, other informal inventories

• Collection of student data, completion of forms

• Explanation of required scores for progression through TABE, Official Practice Test and GED Tests

• Information specific to the GED Tests, e.g., test sites, eligibility, content, score requirements

• Program guidelines and policies, e.g., smoking, breaks, attendance, use of the Internet, privacy, school closings, availability of materials to take home

• Class schedule and class placement

• Information that helps students understand expectations, e.g., goal- setting, the importance of SMART goals and practice writing SMART goals, identifying incremental steps toward long-term goals, the importance of a time commitment

SMART= Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Time-specific

• Study Skills

Allan Quigley suggests that new students complete a "past schooling experience inventory" so that staff may anticipate how a student will respond to returning to an educational program. Another point that I found in the literature but not in Kentucky practice is the notion of "stopping out," in other words, assuring learners that life circumstances might require stopping out temporarily but that the program has ways of supporting continued learning and will welcome the student when he or she is able to return.

Materials—- Materials are those needed to capture demographic data, handbooks written in a learner-friendly manner (perhaps written by students or at least reviewed by students for tone), a flowchart that reinforces the assessment sequence and PowerPoint overviews of orientation content.

Challenges – Dian Kelley from Hardin County said that sometimes students resist coming to orientation because they view it as unrelated to instruction, which is where they want to spend their time. Another Kentucky instructor expressed the opinion that, in reality, instructors may be more reluctant to change to scheduled orientation than students are. In one program, if a student does walk in to the instructional setting, he or she is given program information and asked to sign up for future contact about the next orientation. Anyone who calls in or who has signed in is called with a reminder about the scheduled orientation.

Orientation for Community Building —- Joey Quinton in Pulaski explained that a formal orientation, held at round tables, establishes a sense of community among newcomers. I can believe that because, five years after beginning my position at Morehead State University, I still recall those who went through employee orientation with me. One of the out-of-state interviewees explained that students are paired with a buddy during orientation, who will call the new student if he or she does not follow through with attendance.

Naturally, conversations about orientation frequently veered into conversations about instruction, which can be covered in a later article. Just as programs are adopting structured, scheduled orientations, they are adopting structured, scheduled classes.

Conclusion —- Staff in programs that have adopted a formal orientation offer that they now feel more professional and more productive. In addition, students seem to be more professional and more productive, now taking their work more seriously. One instructor even believes that more students are returning to prepare for postsecondary education after passing the GED Tests because they have high regard for the professionalism of the program staff.

If you hesitate to adopt a scheduled orientation, you might consider two facts.

(1) Kentucky ABE directors who have adopted the practice say that they will never revert.

(2) A federally-sponsored research project, *Classroom Dynamics in Adult Literacy Education*, concluded that "continuous enrollment and mixed skill levels are among the most serious and understated problems in adult literacy education."[1]

[1] Beder, H., and Medina, P., Classroom Dynamics in Adult Literacy Education. National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy. December 2001.

Orientation for Persistence (cont.)

My thanks to Tammy Bramlett in Woodford County, Dian Kelley in Hardin County, Joey Quinton in Pulaski County, Jane Knight, formerly with the Knox County, Tennessee program, and Thelma Lang-Carr with the Jackson County, West Virginia program for the time they gave to phone interviews. Thanks also to Pam Morgan, Logan County, who sent e-mail describing her program's orientation.

> If you are interested in an extensive orientation originally developed for Tennessee's JOBS clients, go to http://www.cls.utk.edu/ls_curriculum.html. There you will find the four-week Learning Skills Curriculum, described this way.
>
> The Learning Skills Curriculum is an approach to orientation and the learning process…that can be used to help stimulate the development of key study skills and serve to motivate the learner to believe again in his/her learning abilities…The curriculum covers such topics as:
>
> - Learning styles
> - Personality
> - Teamwork
> - Problem Solving
> - Goal Setting
> - Test Taking Strategies
>
> Although Tennessee programs no longer offer a four-week orientation, they select from the Learning Skills Curriculum materials and strategies to suit local program needs.

What Did I Do Wrong? By Dawn Hanzel, CCLD Adult Literacy Director

I was SO excited…it was my first experience as a literacy tutor. I wanted to make a difference. I wanted to help someone to read, get a job and change their life.

My first student was 49 years old and anxious to get started. She told me, "I want to get my GED and get a better job" and she wanted it yesterday. She tested at a 4th grade level.

"Please don't make me come to the school," she said.

"How about the library?" I suggested. She wanted to know if anyone would see her there and know what we were doing. Then I said "how about my office after hours?" I felt like I was making plans to sneak out of school and find a secret place to smoke. Still, she was so concerned about people seeing her and discovering why she was there. I assured her my office was private. She lived two blocks away and since she didn't have transportation, she agreed it was a good idea. We made plans to meet twice a week for an hour and a half.

She seemed so committed and dedicated. I followed the advice from my training which taught me to: identify a student's goals; find their barriers; focus on their strengths; show short gains; and use material that is relevant to them. One of her biggest barriers was transportation to a learning facility. With that conquered she was very motivated and wanted to move to the next challenge of getting a new and better job. We were off to a great start!

> ## "Sometimes we can do everything right and still they don't stay."

The first month went great. She showed up every time, on time, with her homework completed and she still seemed motivated. Then, things began to happen. Her daughter was incarcerated for substance abuse and she received temporary custody of her grand children. Shortly after that, her other daughter lost her job and moved in with her bringing her child with her. Her husband, who did not work at all, began pressuring her to quit tutoring. Her attendance began to dwindle and soon she quit showing up at all. After three months, I couldn't reach her any more.

What could've happened? I thought I did everything right to motivate and encourage. I rewarded her for small gains, kept her goals in front of her. I even referred her to social service agencies I thought could help her. What did I do wrong?

As most of us know, keeping adults motivated to persist in adult education programs, especially those at the literacy level, can be more than challenging. When they leave, we sometimes feel responsible and sometimes even defeated. The truth is…we probably didn't do anything "wrong," and sometimes we can do everything "right," and still they don't stay. So…what is the answer? I don't know that there is an answer. I do know that we can't force people to change…but I still believe in our ability to influence. I also believe in reflection and critical thinking. After every situation, we can look at what worked, what did not and what we may have done differently. We can consult with others, try new ideas, and get as much feedback as we can. We also need to reward ourselves and each other for small and large gains.

What Did I Do Wrong? (cont.)

We can remind ourselves constantly, that although the student left the program and did not reach their goals, the amount of time that they spent with us was truly beneficial and a seed was planted.

In order to do this we do need to be aware of best practices that come from the experience of experts. The following ideas are things to try in different ways with different learners. Although these strategies are an investment of time, energy and effort they can give us "the biggest bang for our buck" in the future.

According to Sandra Kerka, author of *Strategies for Retaining Adult Students,* there are five main reasons that adults do not participant or persist in literacy programs:

- Low self-confidence
- Social disapproval
- Situational barriers
- Negative attitude towards education or the educational system
- Low personal priority

There are several approaches that have been proven to alleviate these barriers.

Remember: The first three weeks are critical!

According to Allan Quigley, author of *Rethinking Adult Education,* you should do the following within the first three weeks.

1. Go beyond the formal assessments and include interviewing tools that allow us to get to know the learner. Students may identify the goal of GED or to get a better job but why do they want a better job?

2. We can use tools such as the Prior Schooling, Witkin Embedded Figures Test and Self-Perception Inventory to identify risks and barriers immediately. Then we can have a discussion with them and offer the support these screening identify.

3. Make sure that the person doing the intake and the teacher have constant communication and work as a team.

Low Self-Confidence

- Make special efforts in the first few weeks to orient students and get them to feel their goals are reachable-first by helping them to have realistic goals and expectations.

- Provide a comprehensive orientation that includes assessment of ability, self-esteem, learning styles, motivations and values.

- Offer support services such as peer counseling and mentoring.

- Identify risks and barriers and refer them to special agencies that can support them.

Social Disapproval

- Emphasize the social aspects (making new friends, warm friendly atmosphere that does not represent a traditional school), informal settings.

- Involve community organizations. Advertise in laundromats, churches, area stores. Use video, broadcasting and word-of-mouth to attract non-readers.

- Distribute program information as inserts in store purchases, paychecks or telephone bills or flyers sent home with school children.

- Increase the visibility of the program through community service projects.

- Set up a referral network and educate referral agencies on how to promote your program with their clients.

- Include social activities integrated with educational activities.

Situational Barriers

- Offer programs in accessible neighborhood locations with flexible scheduling to fit adult life-styles.

- Arrange transportation and child care.

- Set up referral networks with community partners.

Negative Attitudes

- Advertise success stories and use successful students to recruit and follow-up on dropouts.

- Emphasize the difference between adult basic education and regular school.

- Offer services in locations that potential adult education students frequent in the community.

Low Personal Priority

- Connect instruction to employment and employability skills, job survival and essential everyday life activities.

- Emphasize daily living/family skills as a means of improving family relationships.

- Give value for money in terms of education, services and facilities.

Keep trying, reflecting, discussing and adapting different methods for different learners. Don't be afraid to make mistakes and don't be afraid to learn. You are sure to see your successes rise.

Tip!

If they aren't "getting it," it could be that they learn differently. Understand and use learning styles to reach your student can make a huge difference with persistence in a learning program.

- I need a sense of belonging, a feeling that I am honestly needed for my total self, not just for my hands, or because I take orders well.

- I need to have a sense of sharing in planning our objectives. My need will be satisfied only when I feel that my ideas have had a fair hearing.

- I need to feel that the goals and objectives arrived at are within reach and that they make sense.

- I need to feel that what I am doing has real purpose.

- I need to share in making the rules by which, together, we shall live and work toward our goals.

- I need to know some clear detail not just what is expected from me. Not only my detailed tasks, but where I have an opportunity to make personal and final decisions.

- I need to have some responsibilities that challenge and are within range of my abilities and interests, and that contribute toward my goals.

- I need to see that progress is being made toward the goals we have set.

- I need to be kept informed.

- I need to have confidence in my leaders. Confidence based upon assurance of consistent fair treatment or recognition.

Adapted from the
Leadership Resource Library

> *"Long-term persistent efforts to achieve do not come from the head; they come from the heart."*
>
> *—~ Drs. Rodger and David Johnson*

"To survive in the political and popular world of literacy education seems to have meant a willingness to accept, not challenge, assumptions. However, renewal and the long-term survival of the field rest not with acceptance but with the exact opposite. They will depend on analysis, questioning, risk taking and above all, the faith that literacy education is worth doing."

—- Allan Quigley
Rethinking Literacy Education p.32

Margaret Atkinson, instructor from Wayne County Adult Education and KAELI graduate, is keeping students eagerly learning and interested.